**OCTOBER**

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**WEDDING HOMILY**

1) Tobit 8:4b-8

2) 1 Peter 3:1-9

3) Matthew 5:13-16

FOCUS: Today we celebrate *with* the bride and groom*.*

So much of what we’re doing here today is counter-cultural. Sure, there are many things here that are found in most weddings: formal attire, floral displays, and meaningful music. These things help express the joy and specialness found in the union of a husband and wife on the day they make promises and vows to one another. There might even be some things familiar in the story of how this relationship developed from *boy meets girl* to them becoming bride and groom that are found in many a love story.

But as we come into this sacred place and hear these sacred words from Scripture, there’s a noticeable difference. We are participating in a sacrament, of which N. and N. are the ministers to each other. Therefore, the focus of our attention today is somewhat different than in other wedding venues. For us, here, we’re *not* celebrating the bride and groom as entities apart from us. We’re celebrating *with* them as they come to give thanks – in our presence and witnessed by the Church – for what the Lord God *has* done in their lives; for what the Lord *is doing* in bringing them to this moment; and what the Lord is *calling them to,* as theylay down their lives for each other. We can hear all of this in the Scriptures just proclaimed.

In our first reading from the Book of Tobit, a newlywed couple begin their wedding night giving thanks to God. They are filled with praise both for the gift of life, and the beauty of the institution of marriage which they now share. They recognize these are gifts of the Lord God. They pledge fidelity and ask for the blessing of a long life together.

Saint Peter, in his writing to some of the earliest Christians in the first years after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, talks about a husband and wife serving one another, putting the needs of the other over themselves, *not return[ing] evil for evil, or insult for insult*.

Jesus, in this Gospel passage from his Sermon on the Mount, highlights the call of all Christians, including married couples, to be *salt of the earth* and *light of the world* by demonstrating selfless, sacrificial love for one another.

What we find as we celebrate with our bride and groom here in this sacred place is not only the secret for happiness in marriage, but for life. Selflessness and self-sacrifice toward one another, and loving one another as Christ loves us, build a strong foundation for every relationship. When we focus not on ourselves but on him who made us, sustains us, saves us, and continues to call us to live lives of selfless sacrificial love, we grow ever closer to him.

Married life is not the only way to conform ourselves to Christ, obviously, but it is the one we honor and celebrate today. May the grace of this sacrament, and your love for God and one another, bring you many years of joy and fulfillment.

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**FUNERAL HOMILY**

**1)** Wisdom 4:7-15

2) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

3) Matthew 25:31-46

FOCUS: The joy of resurrection comes to those who do God’s will.

It may come as a surprise to some when we speak of joy on a day like this. After all, we are gathered here to remember our beloved N., and we can’t help but feel sadness because our earthly relationship with him (her) has come to an end. We are here because our loved one has played a significant part in our lives. We nonetheless can find joy through our readings today because they lead us to the realization that our time on earth is only a temporary prelude to eternal life. And what believer can’t find joy in the thought of spending eternity in the glory of the Lord?

Our first reading from the Book of Wisdom offers some comforting thoughts: *The righteous one … shall be at rest.* And it tells us this righteous one has a soul *pleasing to the Lord,* which at the right time was taken *out of the midst of wickedness.*

And then Saint Paul brings us more solace in our second reading, saying to the Thessalonians: *For if we believe that Jesus died and rose, so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep.* By his death and resurrection, Jesus opened the gates for all who believe. Our hurt is in the loss of our loved one, who took part of each of us with him (her). Our joy is in the knowledge of the resurrection and the fact that our beloved left part of himself (herself) in our hearts.

Our Gospel gives us a strong visual image to drive home the point that God will reward those who are true to his word. In Matthew’s words: *Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Once again, we see comfort and joy rising from today’s Mass of Christian Burial. We say goodbye with hope, the confident expectation that our loved one is on the way to heaven, if not already there.

And so we pray – for the souls of all the faithful departed, that – through God’s mercy – they may rest in peace. And we pray that at the time of our own death, God’s mercy will bring us to our heavenly home with him, and all our loved ones.

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**YEAR C**

**WEEKDAYS II**

Saturday, October 1, 2022 SATURDAY OF

(Lec. 460) 26TH WEEK

1) Job 42:1-3, IN ORDINARY TIME

 5-6, 12-17 (OBL MEM

2) Luke 10:17-24 Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus,

 Virgin and Doctor

 of the Church)

Gospel related: **CCC** 787, 1083, 2603

FOCUS: The Lord desires that we know him and love him.

Today we have a couple of readings that are quite different in nature, yet deal with a similar topic – how God makes himself known, and how he allows us to know him. Our first reading from the last chapter of Job shows Job repenting and taking back the challenging words he said about God throughout the book. We hear him accept God as all-powerful after the Lord reminds Job who the “Creator” was in the creation story. The Lord rewards him with twice the number of children and worldly possessions as Job lost in the first chapter of the book.

In today’s Gospel passage from Luke, Jesus uses the term *Son* and *Father* eight times within two verses, establishing himself as the Son of God while *he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit.* This Trinitarian formula in Luke follows his narration of the Transfiguration, and foretells the time when the Spirit will be sent by the Father and Son to remain with the world. In the Spirit we have an Advocate before the Father, and also the indwelling of God within us, that we might have the gift of faith and the means to know and love God.

We did not have the opportunity, of course, to walk with Jesus or listen first-hand to his teachings, but he has been revealed to us. Using similar words as he spoke to the doubtful Thomas after his resurrection, Jesus indicates that all who know him to be the Son of God, including us, are blessed. But with that knowledge comes the same responsibility that he placed on the Apostles – to preach the Gospel. And who are we to shy away from a good challenge?

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**SUNDAY, OC****TOBER 2, 2022 27TH SUNDAY**

(Lec. 141) **IN ORDINARY TIME**

1) Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

2) 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

3) Luke 17:5-10

Gospel related: **CCC** 162

FOCUS: Faith is a gift, and God is the source and giver of that gift.

To understand today’s Gospel and what prompted the disciples to ask for an increase in faith, it is useful to go back to the previous couple of chapters where Saint Luke tells three parables: the prodigal son, the dishonest steward, and Lazarus and the rich man. Taken together, they remind us that God’s ways are different from our ways, and that if we are to be faithful disciples, we must be guided not by the ways of this world but by the teachings of Christ.

Although we use the word “faith” in a variety of ways, when Jesus speaks here of faith and indeed when Paul speaks about the gift given through the laying on of hands, they are speaking about that inner grace-filled quality that binds us and empowers us to follow and live the Gospel. This is what the disciples sought: an increase in that most precious of all gifts – a strong and enduring relationship with Christ.

It is never easy to be a Christian. The early Christians had to deal with all sorts of threats and persecutions, which makes it easy to understand why this call to faith is at the heart of the Gospels. By asking for an increase in faith, the disciples are recognizing that Jesus is the source of this supernatural faith and that it is not the outcome of human strength or willpower, but a gift from God. Because it is a gift, it is not something we can boast of as an achievement. The end of the Gospel passage reminds us that we are servants of the word, and when we respond to it we are simply doing our duty.

It can be difficult to be a faithful disciple today because our world is increasingly secular in outlook. Some attempt to silence the Gospel message and relegate faith to the realm of the private, where it can have no impact on the public square.

In such a world our faith is of more and more importance. To be a faith-filled Christian is not simply about having an inner conviction, but also having the courage and strength to live our beliefs on a daily basis. Christ’s word to us today is a word of encouragement that we need only a little trust – the size of the mustard seed – in his strength to carry us through in this life. It is the power of God living in and working through us that will ultimately allow us to be faith-filled as well as faithful.

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Monday, October 3, 2022 MONDAY OF

(Lec. 461) 27TH WEEK

1) Galatians 1:6-12 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 10:25-37

Gospel related: **CCC** 1293, 1825, 2083, 2822 **CSDC** 112

FOCUS: We are called to compassion.

*And who is my neighbor?* As with many passages in Scripture this is not a simple question, and Jesus’ answer challenges us to grow.

The question comes in the Gospel passage after Jesus reminds us that we are called to give everything we have and everything we are to God. This call is difficult to wrap our minds around. We might wonder how we can ever fully know we are doing this or if we are even on the right path. The story of the Good Samaritan shows us the way.

Jesus has shown us the way of compassion. In examples such as the Good Samaritan and even in how Jesus lived his life, he shines a light on the path. We all have experience in showing compassion to others. We show compassion when we listen to a friend in need of an attentive ear. We show it when we pray for those who struggle. We show it any time we put others first. There are so many ways to practice compassion. This is the road we travel, and we are called to continue on the journey, with the strength of everything we have and everything we are.

Shortly, we will once again be fed as we continue on our path of discipleship. Jesus shares his very self with us, and we in turn follow his example. It is a journey where we continually practice compassion. Nourished together, may God give us the grace to love the Lord with everything we have, and practice his compassion in a world that needs more recognition of what it means to be a neighbor.

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Tuesday, October 4, 2022 TUESDAY OF

(Lec. 462) 27TH WEEK

1) Galatians 1:13-24 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 10:38-42 (OBL MEM

 Saint Francis of Assisi)

Gospel related: **CSDC** 260

FOCUS: God calls us to listen to his teachings.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus clearly teaches the importance of hard work and service. Jesus sees and values our labor. He strengthens us to lay down our lives in service to others. But today, in *this* moment, during this holy Mass, Jesus invites us to draw near, to sit at his feet, to attend to this *one particular* thing we call worship.

For that is how God made us. We are made for love and communion with God. “God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength” (*CCC* 1).

We are finite. The God who set us apart from our mother’s womb understands what we are (and are *not*) capable of. God, who knows us intimately, calls us, through his grace, to be present, to sit and listen to his teaching, to prayerfully discern what he is asking us to do at every given moment in our day. And here, in this liturgy, we participate in the divine life of the Trinity, an eternal exchange of love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This action, this liturgical participation, is our right and duty by baptism (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14). It is the better part – let us not ever take it for granted.

As we draw near to Jesus in this liturgy, may we, like Mary, grow in love for Christ. May we be strengthened for the service to which we are called as we go forth. May this Eucharist enable us to attend more fully to God’s voice in each moment.

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Wednesday, October 5, 2022 WEDNESDAY OF

(Lec. 463) 27TH WEEK

1) Galatians 2:1-2, 7-14 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 11:1-4 (Opt. Mem.

 Saint Faustina Kowalska,

 Virgin;

 USA: Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos,

 Priest)

Gospel related: **CCC** 520, 1425, 2601, 2632, 2759, 2773, 2845

FOCUS: Jesus gives us the grace to share the Gospel with everyone.

In the first reading today, Saint Paul writes about the importance of cooperating with grace in sharing the Gospel with everyone. It was Saint Peter’s mission to share the Gospel with the Jews, while Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles: two groups of people from vastly different backgrounds. The circumcised and the uncircumcised; the people under the law of God, and those who had never known the God of Israel. Paul acknowledges the importance that all people hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

His words paint a beautiful image for us today in our own mission to share the Good News. God’s love encompasses all peoples, and was meant to be ours from the beginning of Creation. Perhaps the message Saint Paul would tell us today is to share that message, share the Gospel, with anyone and everyone. We are called to carry on and participate in the great commission to go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (cf., Matthew 28:19).

Where do we get the strength and authority to do so? Through our baptism, we are grafted into the life of Christ, and his priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission. And Christ has taught us to ask for what we need, and how to do so. In the Lord’s Prayer, we have the words we need to unite ourselves to him and his saving mission. We ought never hesitate to approach God with our needs, our desires, and our request for forgiveness. God’s mercy is everlasting – believe it, live it, share it.

**Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos (1819-67)** -In 1843, Blessed Francis sailed to America from Germany to dedicate himself to missionary work. Having been accepted by the Redemptorist Congregation in Germany, Francis was ordained a priest in Baltimore and began ministering to German-speaking immigrants. He was admired as a kind and understanding confessor and spiritual director, and was known as a gifted preacher. As a parish priest, he made himself always available to those in need. Saint John Paul II proclaimed him Blessed in the year 2000.

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Thursday, October 6, 2022 THURSDAY OF

(Lec. 464) 27TH WEEK

1) Galatians 3:1-5 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 11:5-13 (Opt. Mem.

 Saint Bruno,

 Priest;

 USA: Blessed Marie Rose Durocher,

 Virgin)

Gospel related: **CCC** 443, 728, 2613, 2623, 2671, 2761 **CSDC** 453

FOCUS: Prayer changes us.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus encourages the disciples to be persistent in prayer and to trust that the Father will provide for their needs. He compares God the Father to a human father, who would never give his son a snake when he asked for a fish, nor a scorpion when he asked for an egg. God will not trick us or abandon us in our time of need.

If we listen closely to the end of today’s Gospel reading, Jesus asks the disciples, *If you … know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him*? The gift we are guaranteed to receive from the Father is the Holy Spirit, who the *catechism* tells us “contains all gifts” (2613). When we pray persistently, we can expect to receive gifts such as wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and fortitude.

God is not a vending machine or a genie waiting to grant our every wish. Our prayers cannot change the mind of God. But they can change us. If they do not heal our bodies, they can heal our hearts. They can give us strength to persevere in the face of suffering or grant us new insight into our desires. Prayer may not change our circumstances, but it will change us. We can trust that God will provide what we need most.

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Friday, October 7, 2022 FRIDAY OF

(Lec. 465) 27TH WEEK

1) Galatians 3:7-14 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 11:15-26 (OBL MEM

 Our Lady of the Rosary)

Gospel related: **CCC** 385, 700

FOCUS: The mission of God is to gather, to unite.

The evil one scatters; the Lord gathers. The evil one divides; the Lord unites.

God gathered a people under the leadership of Abraham, one of the most important figures of the Hebrew Scriptures. In today’s first reading, Paul quotes the Book of Genesis, wherein God tells Abraham, *Through you shall all the nations be blessed*. With the gift of faith, Abraham says “yes” to God’s miraculous offer to father a nation of believers, the Israelites.

God goes on to unite this nation by various means: the rite of circumcision, the gifting of the law, and the covenant of God’s steadfast love. In return, the Israelites are drawn together by their faithfulness, albeit imperfect, to Yahweh alone. The *blessing of Abraham* that Paul references is the grace of being gathered and united, as God’s family, through faith.

If gathering and uniting are God’s primary goals, it is no wonder that Jesus in today’s Gospel takes offense at the crowd’s accusation that he is in cahoots with Beelzebul, the prince of division.

When Jesus says *Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters,* he is drawing a line in the sand. On one side resides the family of God, a group of diverse people united by faith. On the other side are individuals divided from one another because of real or perceived differences.

The *blessing of Abraham* is being offered to us, but it demands that we put aside our divisions to recognize God’s uniting love for all. As we turn to the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity, let us pray in thanksgiving for the gift of being gathered as a family of faith today. But let us not stop there, offering a prayer for even greater unity in our families, in our Church, and in our world.

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Saturday, October 8, 2022 SATURDAY OF

(Lec. 466) 27TH WEEK

1) Galatians 3:22-29 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 11:27-28 (Saturday in honor

 of BVM)

FOCUS: While the devil seeks division, God desires unity.

The world is full of division. Everywhere we look, it seems people are fiercely divided into different camps, and so much seems to be reduced to “Are you on my side, or their side?” Even among members of God’s holy Church, divisions can cause deep rifts.

Today’s readings remind us that this is not the way Christians should think. These divisions are wounds in the body of Christ. Satan uses division for his unholy designs. In fact, the word “devil” comes from the Greek word “diabolos,” meaning “to divide.” Pope Francis has said “Divisions are a handy weapon that the devil uses to destroy the Church from within” (address to Participants in the Seminar of Studies for Bishops in the Mission Territories, Sept. 9, 2016).

In contrast, God desires unity. In his Letter to the Galatians, Saint Paul says *Through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus*. In today’s Gospel, Jesus tells a woman that *those who hear the word of God and observe it* are *blessed*. They are children of God.

Today, let us each ask the Holy Spirit to show us how we can help foster unity within the Church and in our world – to see where divisions exist and how we can help heal them. May we each recommit to hearing and responding to the word of God as we seek to build up the body of Christ.

As we prepare to approach the table of the Lord, let us remember that the Eucharist unites us with Christ and, through him, with each other.

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**SUND****AY, OCTOBER 9, 2022 28TH SUNDAY**

(Lec. 144)  **IN ORDINARY TIME**

1) 2 Kings 5:14-17

2) 2 Timothy 2:8-13

3) Luke 17:11-19

Gospel related: **CCC** 586, 2463

FOCUS: Give thanks to God for the new life he offers us in Christ Jesus.

In today’s readings, we hear two stories of healing. In the first reading, Naaman, a foreigner, was healed from his leprosy after plunging into the Jordan River seven times as instructed by the prophet Elisha. In the Gospel, ten lepers are healed of their leprosy as they are walking to present themselves to the priests, per Jesus’ instruction. We can only imagine the relief and joy all these people must have felt at realizing they were healed. The years of suffering and ostracism from society were finally behind them and they could live an ordinary life.

This joy is reflected in Naaman’s response. He wanted to give Elisha a gift to show his appreciation and gratitude. But Elisha would not accept a gift, and this redirected Naaman to a more appropriate response – to recognize that the God of Israel whom Elisha served was the only true God and the only one worthy of worship and praise.

With the lepers, we can only imagine the amazement and joy they must have felt when they looked at or touched their skin and found it was healed.

This entire experience prompted one of the lepers, a Samaritan, to turn around and return to Jesus and fall at his feet, recognizing that Jesus was no ordinary man. His gratitude, his recognition of what God had done for him through Jesus, brought about an additional gift – faith and salvation. Like Naaman, this healing was a catalyst for the Samaritan, and it led him on a new spiritual path. He was able to recognize that Jesus wasn’t offering a return to his previous life but was inviting him to a new one.

Through this healing, Jesus had invited all ten lepers to this new path that leads to faith and salvation. But only one of them seems to have been able to recognize and to have accepted this invitation. What kept the other nine from doing so as well? We do not know.

But we do know that the Lord has done something amazing and life-changing for us. He has redeemed us through his passion, death, and resurrection and remains here, with us, in the Eucharist, to sustain and strengthen us. And should we fall into the temptation of walking away, the Lord works to draw us back and is always ready to receive us back into his fold. Let us give thanks to the Lord for his faithfulness and goodness. Let us give thanks for the new life God offers us in Christ Jesus.

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Monday, October 10, 2022 MONDAY OF

(Lec. 467) 28TH WEEK

1) Galatians 4:22-24, IN ORDINARY TIME

 26-27, 31—5:1

2) Luke 11:29-32

FOCUS: The path out of darkness is Jesus Christ.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus labels the people of his time as an evil generation. Evil, as defined by the *catechism* (310-11), is the free choice that angels and humans have to sin. Evil, and its resultant sin, can simply be understood as the absence of love, and more specifically, the turning away from God’s love.

Jesus is declaring that the people of his time have turned away from God. Honestly, he could probably also say that about every generation that has existed throughout time. As the greatest of prophets, however, he doesn’t just shed light on the darkness of evil. He offers a way out of that darkness. That path is through him.

When we receive the Eucharist, we remember Jesus’ greatest act of love and are filled with the grace that only he can offer. That grace transforms us to be a sign, as Jonah was, for those in the darkness, that God’s love is always there for them. That grace also fills us with wisdom, as Solomon was filled, to know how we can engage with our sisters and brothers and lead them to the doors of the kingdom of God.

Is there evil in and among this generation? Absolutely. We are no different than those who came before us in our fallen nature. But our hope lies in Christ who overcame evil and the finality of death. Death no longer triumphs. As Saint Paul wrote to the Galatians, *for freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery* – that is, the lure of sin and evil. We can be a people who turn not from God, but from evil. We pray for the grace to do so always.

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Tuesday, October 11, 2022 TUESDAY OF

(Lec. 468) 28TH WEEK

1) Galatians 5:1-6 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 11:37-41 (Opt. Mem.

 Saint John XXIII,

 Pope)

Gospel related: **CCC** 579, 588, 2447

FOCUS: Honor God by acting out of love.

Rules and laws are important. They provide structure and help us recognize that we need boundaries if we are going to live together peacefully. Today’s readings do not contradict this. But their focus is on love, not simply duty or adherence to obligation.

The Pharisees followed hundreds of rules. For many of these religious leaders, following the rules became more important than the reason for the rule itself. In some cases, the rules separated the leaders from the people they were supposed to be helping; sometimes they even harmed people. Jesus knew the difference, and opened people's eyes to what the Father is really asking of us.

God’s law emanates from love. Our human laws are to do the same. Rituals and practices, like those the Pharisees followed, are not bad in themselves. But if they lose the connection to love, either for God or for our fellow humans, they no longer are consistent with what God asks of us.

As Jesus points out, paying attention to how clean a cup or dish is on the outside, but ignoring the filthy water or garbage inside, is foolish and counterproductive. It is a waste of time and even dangerous to our health. In a similar way, if what we do is not out of love, then our actions become foolish and counterproductive, rather than building up our relationship with God and our neighbors.

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Wednesday, October 12, 2022 WEDNESDAY OF

(Lec. 469) 28TH WEEK

1) Galatians 5:18-25 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 11:42-46

Gospel related: **CCC** 579

FOCUS: Let our lives bear the fruits of the Spirit.

There is a song many kids learn at Catholic summer or Bible camp, or perhaps at youth conferences. The song is about “the fruits of the Spirit,” and while it's somewhat silly, it is meant to engage kids and help them memorize the passage from Paul’s Letter to the Galatians that we just heard. Its lyrics explain that the fruits of the Spirit are not like the ones we eat, but “are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness and self-control.” Through song, the children learn that a fruit of the Spirit is something that can be observed by others – a habit, characteristic, or action.

By helping children to memorize the fruits of the Spirit, camp leaders are helping children to see the importance of one’s actions. For our behaviors and actions reveal what is in our hearts. These fruits of the Spirit come from within. The fruits of our life reflect the work of our spirits. If we dedicate time to prayer and study of Scripture, then it’s natural that our behaviors will begin to shift. Saint Paul is calling Christians to think about how their behaviors reflect their beliefs. It is an invitation to personal reflection and to consider whether or not our lives are marked by the fruits of the Spirit.

The Gospel also deals with the importance of action in the life of a believer. In the passage, Jesus rebukes a group of Pharisees and scholars of the law. He does so because their actions and behaviors do not mirror the spirit of the law. Jesus declares that they are too concerned with legal details and have lost sight of God’s justice and mercy.

As followers of Christ, we ought to consider if we are living out the fruits of the Spirit. We may no longer sing silly songs to remind us to live with generosity and kindness, but we can still memorize this list from Saint Paul and find ways to build habits that will lead us to bear fruit for the Spirit.

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Thursday, October 13, 2022 THURSDAY OF

(Lec. 470) 28TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 1:1-10 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 11:47-54

Gospel related: **CCC** 579

FOCUS: We are imperfect children of God, and he desires all good things for us.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus lambasts his listeners for their (and their ancestors’) ways: *‘I will send to them prophets and Apostles; some of them they will kill and persecute.’* *Woe to you*, Jesus says, woe to you who reject the prophets and focus on all the wrong things. He blames the scholars of the law for taking away the key of knowledge – that is, not teaching correctly the letter or the spirit of the law.

Jesus’ words offend both the Pharisees and Scribes, and when he leaves, Scripture tells us, they began to *act with hostility toward him, and to interrogate him about many things*. Here, the Greek for “interrogate” suggests “to draw him out” (in order to trap him), but interestingly, the same word can also mean the opposite, to “stifle” or suppress his speech.

How is it that two prominent groups of Judaism can have it so wrong? God sends them prophets and apostles, and they kill them? How is it that they focus on the superficial but neglect the things of God?

Although it is easy to look back on “those groups” and judge them, don’t we ourselves sometimes chafe at instruction from the Lord? (“Lord, you want me to truly love whom?”)

So in looking at the Pharisees and scribes, we have some insight into ourselves, really. We are human, we sin, we do not always trust God’s word, and we fail to consider that perhaps the Holy Spirit may have more wisdom than the latest media slogan. And all of that does not surprise the Lord. This is why he came to redeem us; this is why he remains with us. Although the Church is imperfect, it is made up of children of God whom he loves and for whom he desires all good things.

As we approach the Eucharist, let us thank God for always making the truth available to us, and ask him to help us recognize it, even when it challenges our own way of thinking. *I am the way and the truth and the life, says the Lord; no one comes to the Father except through me*.

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Friday, October 14, 2022 FRIDAY OF

(Lec. 471) 28TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 1:11-14 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 12:1-7 (Opt. Mem.

 Saint Callistus I,

 Pope and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 342, 678

FOCUS: God sees each of us and invites us to join in his divine life.

A recent study noted that 22 percent of Americans reported they felt isolated or lonely. Other studies report that people desire to be seen, heard, known, and valued. The question is: known, seen, and valued by whom?

In today’s Gospel, Jesus answers the question with one word: God. God knows us each so well that he has counted the hairs on our heads. But that knowledge does not end there. Rather, the Letter to the Ephesians reminds us that our heavenly Father sees us and has found us worthy to share in his divine life. He then invites us each to participate in making Jesus and his redemptive love known in our world.

God invites each one of us to share in his work every day. The question is: How is God inviting *us* into a relationship with him? Are we ready to respond?

As we prepare to meet Jesus in the Eucharist, let us ask for the grace to hear the Father’s call and the courage to say “yes” to his invitation.

**Saint Callistus I (d. 223)** - Although he began life as a slave in the latter half of the second century, Callistus was given a second chance due to the kindness of the emperor’s mistress. He eventually became a deacon and was elected pope in the year 218 by a majority vote of clergy and laity in Rome. A compassionate and controversial pope, Callistus absolved any sinner who was truly penitent, and also legitimized marriage between Christian women and Christian slaves. Saint Hippolytus bitterly opposed Callistus, and was soon elected as the first antipope. The schism lasted 18 years.

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Saturday, October 15, 2022 SATURDAY OF

(Lec. 472) 28TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 1:15-23 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 12:8-12 (OBL MEM

 Saint Teresa of Jesus,

 Virgin and Doctor

 of the Church)

Gospel related: **CCC** 333, 1287, 1864

FOCUS: Christians must share Jesus with others.

In Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, *Joy of the Gospel,* he calls for renewed fervor for missionary discipleship. This exhortation is meant not only for the pastoral leaders in the hierarchy, but also for every one of us baptized Christians. We have an individual responsibility to share the Good News of Christ.

Perhaps we have never before thought of ourselves as missionaries, so we may feel at a loss for how to even begin such a noble task. We may fear embarrassing ourselves or offending friends and co-workers. We may fear misrepresenting the Gospel as we strain to recall CCD lessons or formative chats with grandparents.

So perhaps the best place to start is with a simple acknowledgement and ownership of our baptismal identity as a missionary disciple. At baptism we received the gift of faith, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to enlighten us in understanding, knowledge, and wisdom as we grow and are instructed in that faith. We are anointed as royalty within the kingdom of God, and have “put on Christ” in uniting ourselves to his life and death.

Have confidence! We have been given all we need to share the Joy of the Gospel. Having said that, however, it couldn’t hurt to engage in some study of the Bible, Church teachings, and history. But don’t become overwhelmed. We start where we can and open our hearts to the Lord. Jesus promises that he sends his Spirit and that *the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say.* So, with humility and grace, may we cast our fears aside and embrace our mission to share the Good News.

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**SUNDAY,** **OCTOBER 16, 2022 29TH SUNDAY**

(Lec. 147) **IN ORDINARY TIME**

1) Exodus 17:8-13

2) 2 Timothy 3:14—4:2

3) Luke 18:1-8

Gospel related: **CCC** 675, 2098, 2573, 2613

FOCUS: Pray with confidence, like Moses.

The Exodus journey had barely begun before Moses and Israel were ambushed by the armies of Amalek at the oasis of Rephidim in the Sinai Desert. Historians believe the two armies were evenly matched. Victory came not at the hands of swords and spears that day, but in the upraised hands of Moses, calling out to God for help. When Moses’ arms were raised, Israel was victorious. If his arms came down, the Amalek began to advance. Moses and Israel had to persevere. In placing their lives and their burdensome task in the hands of God, trusting in him completely to provide for their need, they didn’t just win against their foe, they *mowed down Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword*.

Moses, Joshua, and Israel showed the same kind of trust in the Lord that Saint Paul would recommend in his writing to the young Bishop of Crete, Timothy, when he said: *Remain faithful to what you have learned . . . [and] be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient*. This applies to our work, our prayer, and our petitions. Often people tend to give up after a few unsuccessful attempts, feeling a mix of despair and discouragement. God wants us to be so trusting in him that we will continue to lift our hearts in prayer even when all hope seems lost.

We are called upon to pray like Moses with our arms held high, calling out to God who alone can give us victory in the battle. When we become tired and put our hands down, the enemy begins to prevail. Moses had Aaron and Hur to prop up his arms. We have the Church, the sacraments, and each other.

In the Gospel parable, Jesus rewards persistence, patience, and perseverance. The judge kept resisting. The widow kept insisting. Like her, we must call out to God *day and night,* demonstrating our great need but also our greater trust in him. “Shouldn’t once be enough if God is all-powerful?” some may ask. God is all-powerful. We are not. We keep asking so that we can condition ourselves to see God as the source of all life and every blessing, and the only One who can answer our cries for help.

Jesus asks, *When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?* Our Lord was asking that question at a time in history when very few people believed in the one God. The world was pagan, and their deities were many, covering everything from agriculture to astronomy. History is repeating itself, as more and more people call themselves spiritual but not religious, and atheism is the fastest growing religious group in America. Like Moses, it is time for us once more to raise up our hands and arms, our voices and hearts to God, trusting in him to see us through and to bring us home.

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Monday, October 17, 2022 MONDAY OF

(Lec. 473) 29TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 2:1-10 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 12:13-21 (OBL MEM

 Saint Ignatius of Antioch,

 Bishop and Martyr)

Gospel related: **CCC** 549 **CSDC** 325, 326

FOCUS: God who is truly rich desires to share his wealth with us.

It has become a trite truism that “money cannot buy happiness.” Even so, the desires of the rich man in Jesus’ parable – to “eat, drink, and be merry” – still abound in the spirit of the age.

In the parable, the man’s ambition was to be comfortable and to enjoy the good things of this life. This day never comes and the happiness he expected from his accumulated wealth never matures.

This is not to say that food and merriment are unwise, or even bad. After all, the Lord made us – we belong to him. There is much to celebrate! The question, however, is “what lies at the foundation of our festivity?” Is it pride in our own accomplishments – as if the Lord had no hand in it? Or is it out of joy and thankfulness for the gifts we have been given, both temporal and everlasting?

The good news is that the happiness of possessing earthly wealth is not our true destiny. Instead, God who is truly rich desires to share his wealth with us. His wealth is a great and bountiful mercy. God’s love is not greedy – it overflows and loves us even while we remain dead in our sins and enslaved to the greed of our hearts. In his mercy, Christ Jesus has given us our most valuable possession: our salvation in Christ Jesus. And so we live not to be comfortable now, but to be forever happy with our God in eternity.

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Tuesday, October 18, 2022 **SAINT LUKE,**

(Lec. 661) **EVANGELIST**

1) 2 Timothy 4:10-17b **- FEAST**

2) Luke 10:1-9

Gospel related: **CCC** 765, 2122, 2611 **CSDC** 259, 492

FOCUS: *Into whatever house you enter, first say “Peace to this household.”*

Today is the feast of Saint Luke the evangelist. In our first reading, we hear that he accompanied Paul on his mission. Though others became distracted by worldly pursuits, Luke stood by him. Despite being abandoned by his friends during his first trial, the Lord gave Paul strength, allowing him to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles who were present.

The story in today’s Gospel is unique to Luke’s account. Jesus chooses seventy-two disciples to go ahead of him into every town he plans to enter, in order to prepare the way for him. They are given instructions for how to conduct this ministry. First, they are told to pray – to ask God to send laborers into the harvest. Then, they are instructed to go on their way – *like lambs among wolves* is the way Jesus describes it. Perhaps this is why he tells them to travel light, carrying no money, sack, or sandals. He tells them to greet no one along the way. They are to focus on the task at hand. Once they have reached their destination, they are to extend a peaceful greeting to any household they enter. Where peace is accepted, they are to stay. They are not to move from one house to another in the same town, but to be a stable presence. Jesus tells them to eat what is set before them, to cure the sick, and to proclaim that *the Kingdom of God is at hand for you*.

As followers of Christ, we have inherited this mission to proclaim the kingdom of God. At the end of each Mass, we are sent in peace to bring what we have received – Christ’s very presence – and share it with the world. Though living in the world, we are not to lose sight of our future hope. We pray for and seek out more laborers to join us; we pray for God to direct our work of evangelization. Like the disciples who have gone before us, our message will not always be accepted, but we are meant to persevere in the face of rejection and trust the Lord to bring the good work he began to completion.

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Wednesday, October 19, 2022 WEDNESDAY OF

(Lec. 475) 29TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 3:2-12 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 12:39-48 (OBL MEM

 USA: Saints John de Brébeuf

 and Isaac Jogues,

 Priests,

 and Companions,

 Martyrs)

Gospel related: **CCC** 2849

FOCUS: As members of God’s holy household, we are heirs to the kingdom.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus breaks open the meaning of the parable of the faithful and prudent steward. It’s a very simple lesson and one with which we can all connect, even if the idea of a servant/master relationship might seem alien to our modern ears. For the believer the lesson is clear: As we await the return of Christ (our master) at a date and time unknown, we his disciples (servants) are to be vigilant and ready, prudent in our actions, and faithful and honest in our dealings with others.

Because we are not privy to the exact time of Christ’s return or indeed our own passing from this world, we are like the waiting servant. Jesus therefore contrasts two different scenarios and responses to this waiting time: There is the faithful servant who continues with his duties, and there is the imprudent servant who takes advantage of the seeming delay to mistreat those who serve under him and to abuse his position. Both will receive recompense according to their actions.

Writing to the Ephesians, Paul reminds us that we are also coheirs with Israel in the promise in Jesus Christ. What beautiful words that deserve our attention and reflection. Where once the covenant promises pertained to Israel alone, now in Christ those promises and the hope they give belong to all creation, Jew and Gentile alike. Using powerful images from construction and the household, Paul recalls how we are no longer strangers or sojourners, but members of the household of God, for Christ has broken down the wall that once separated both groups.

As we move toward the end of the liturgical year, let us strive to be that faithful and prudent servant who is ready to greet Christ when he returns in glory. Let us meditate on our identity as future citizens and heirs to the kingdom and members of the household of God when Christ returns in glory.

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Thursday, October 20, 2022 THURSDAY OF

(Lec. 476) 29TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 3:14-21 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 12:49-53 (Opt. Mem.

 USA: Saint Paul of the Cross,

 Priest)

Gospel related: **CCC** 536, 607, 696, 1225, 2804

FOCUS: Preach the truth, with the zeal and fire of the Holy Spirit.

Fire is considered one of humankind’s greatest discoveries. It also has many biblical references. For example, God used a fiery column to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He talked to Moses through a burning bush. And early in Luke’s Gospel, John the Baptist says, *one is coming who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* That’s what Jesus is referencing in Luke’s account today – igniting the fire of the Holy Spirit in his disciples on Pentecost. Of course, Jesus knows those fires cannot be ignited until the baptism he references today. That baptism is his passion and death. Until his death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit would not descend on the Apostles with “tongues of fire.”

Jesus says that the spreading of the Gospel by his disciples causes division in families. Some people will accept his word, while others in the same families will reject Jesus. This may be apparent in some of our families, but it is certainly obvious when we consider the human family as a whole. Nonetheless, the Lord wants us to continue preaching the truth, with the zeal and fire of the Holy Spirit. And we must never forget to be persistent in prayer.

Evangelization is difficult, but we can do anything with God’s help. In Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, he emphasizes that the Holy Spirit will grant strength to our *inner self,* noting that the Lord *is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine.* Nothing is beyond the Lord’s power.

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Friday, October 21, 2022 FRIDAY OF

(Lec. 477) 29TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 4:1-6 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 12:54-59

FOCUS: To err is human. To forgive, divine.

“To err is human. To forgive, divine.” These words from Alexander Pope, a poet during the Enlightenment, speak to today’s Scripture readings. Although neither Paul nor Jesus refers directly to human weakness or reconciliation, they focus on the need for forgiveness to be a part of our lives.

Saint Paul writes the people of Ephesus that through their common baptism, they have become one community united to each other through the Holy Spirit. One may conclude from the list of attributes Paul outlines that there is friction in the community. How difficult it can be, in the midst of conflict, to be humble and gentle with each other, to be patient, to bear with one another through love, as Saint Paul implores. It’s also a reminder for us to have the grace to ask for forgiveness if we are at fault for creating division in a community, and the grace to offer forgiveness freely to one who may have trespassed against us.

Jesus also addresses conflict within a community, and here he puts it in a legal context. He was encouraging all to settle their differences within their community and not rely on outsiders. He urged them to judge for themselves – to choose and decide – what is right. While his emphasis is on the local community, we can also understand Jesus’ words to be about the last judgment. He cautions us not to waver in our decision to follow him. This includes having the humility to ask God to forgive our trespasses against others, as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. May God have mercy on us all, despite our human errors, that we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life and may praise and glorify God forever.

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Saturday, October 22, 2022 SATURDAY OF

(Lec. 478) 29TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 4:7-16 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 13:1-9 (Opt. Mem.

 Saint John Paul II;

 Saturday in honor

 of BVM)

FOCUS: *Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord*.

In today’s parable, a gardener intercedes on behalf of a fig tree. He tells the landowner he will nurture the tree, feed it, water it, and try to make it the best tree possible. The landowner decides not to destroy the tree, allowing the gardener have a go at saving it.

This is an interesting scenario, is it not? The landowner is in charge and presumably has to concern himself with the production of goods, the availability of resources, and the distribution of labor. What benefit does it give him to keep a waste of a tree when he could better use that spot of ground for something fertile, and his laborer’s time for something productive? And what a cheeky gardener (!) who answers his master’s command with his own: *Sir, leave it* … *I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it.*

While the parable may serve Luke’s purpose in showing the continuing patience of God for his people to repent – and that Christ is the one who can make the fruit of repentance appear – we can also see ourselves, in a way, in the role of the gardener. As Christ has done, so we might continue to do. If we use his tools and his care for the soil, we, too, may enable the tree to bear fruit. We have given gifts to help others know God and become the best children of God possible. And, like the tree itself, there are times when we need the help of others to build us up and strengthen us.

We give thanks, therefore, for the landowner who listened to and trusted his gardener. Because that fig tree survives, and grows and bears fruit through God’s grace. As Paul writes, *Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift*. He gave us these gifts, that, *living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole Body … brings about the Body’s growth and builds itself up in love.*

**Saint John Paul II (1920-2005)** - One of the most influential leaders of the twentieth century, Pope John Paul II was the first Polish pope and the first non-Italian pope since 1522. He was instrumental in bringing an end to Communist rule both in Poland and the whole of Europe. His pontificate was also marked by tremendous strides in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. He was the first pope to visit both a mosque and a synagogue. By the time of his death in 2005, he was one of the longest-serving popes in history.

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**SUNDAY, O****CTOBER 23, 2022 30TH SUNDAY**

(Lec. 150) **IN ORDINARY TIME**

1) Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18

2) 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

3) Luke 18:9-14

Gospel related: **CCC** 588, 2559, 2613, 2631, 2667, 2839

FOCUS: The Lord hears the cry of those humble enough to admit their need for him.

The Lord hears the cry of the poor and the oppressed. He also hears the cry of … the tax collector.

In Jesus’ time, the tax collector’s job was to enforce the tax imposed by the Roman occupiers. Tax collectors were known to overcharge and pocket the difference. They were perceived as greedy, dishonest, and more loyal to the Romans than to their own community and kin. Of course, we feel sympathy for the lowly and the oppressed; we understand why the Lord attends to the cries of orphans and widows. But the tax collector? It is not so easy to feel sympathy toward him, or to understand why his prayer is heard. Yet Jesus challenges us with this parable and its conclusion: The tax collector went home justified.

Obviously, the circumstances of the lowly and oppressed are very different from the tax collector. One does not choose to be weak or poor, or to be a widow or orphan. It is life’s unfortunate circumstances that bring about such conditions, usually through no fault of one’s own. The tax collector chooses his profession and how he conducts his business. Yet in this parable, the tax collector shares an important virtue with the poor and oppressed: humility. They have all been humbled, whether by life’s circumstances or their own doing.

The lowly and oppressed know their poverty, their weakness, and their need for the Lord. They have been humbled by life’s circumstances, and they willingly place themselves at the Lord’s hands. The tax collector, too, has been humbled. He realizes he is a sinner in need of God’s mercy. He goes to the temple to pray, but cannot even lift his eyes. As he beats his breast in the traditional gesture of sorrow and remorse, he begs for mercy. Like the orphan and widow, he puts himself in God’s hands. The Lord hears his cry, and he goes home justified.

The Lord hears the cry of the poor and the tax collector; but does he hear our prayers? The Lord knows no favorites, but he hears the cry of those who are humble enough to admit their need for him, their need for his mercy and redemption. He waits for us to need him – to long for him – so that he can be our strength and our salvation. When we pray, it is not to exalt ourselves as more worthy to be heard by him than others. Rather, when we pray it is to humble ourselves to be heard.

God’s Son humbled himself to be one with us, to teach us to be humble and to place ourselves in God’s hands, as he did when he surrendered himself to the cross. In this Eucharist, we recall his humility and seek the grace to be humble like him.

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Monday, October 24, 2022 MONDAY OF

(Lec. 479) 30TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 4:32—5:8 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 13:10-17 (Opt. Mem.

 Saint Anthony Mary Claret,

 Bishop)

Gospel related: **CCC** 582 **CSDC** 261

FOCUS: Live as children of the light, avoiding all darkness and sin.

Saint Paul highlights the divide between light and darkness in the first reading. In reality, he is showing that the divide starts in the human heart. From there, we exercise our will toward holiness or sin.

*Be imitators of God... live in love...* this sounds fine. But when Paul identifies specific sins, that is where the work is. Both the cost and reward are high: The kingdom of God is at stake. *No immoral or impure or greedy person, that is, an idolater, has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God*.

Paul identifies sin with idolatry. We might be tempted to think that idolatry was strictly a biblical problem. As long as we do not worship any actual pagan idols – think the Israelites and the golden calf – we’re okay, right?

Not quite. We fashion idols for ourselves when we prioritize something before God in our lives, or give honor or “worship” to something that should be reserved to him alone. These idols are more subtle and perhaps not as easy to see as a large golden calf, but can be identified through an examination of conscience, or even just an honest assessment of our daily activities.

What sins do we run to for comfort instead of God? What entertainment do we prioritize at the expense of our spiritual life? What things in our lives do we make “big” while making God “small”? Jesus taught that we cannot serve two masters, God and mammon (Matthew 6:24). The same principle applies to the light of grace and the darkness of sin. One cannot serve idols and God at the same time; only one can be the master.

Be solid in faith, hope, and love. We remain *children of light,* and our merciful Lord awaits us in prayer and the sacraments. Let us live in the light and claim our baptismal inheritance in the kingdom of God.

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Tuesday, October 25, 2022 TUESDAY OF

(Lec. 480) 30TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 5:21-33 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 13:18-21

Gospel related: **CCC** 2660

FOCUS: The kingdom of God is at hand, but not yet fulfilled.

A walk in the woods can be a powerful experience. At first glance, it can seem like just going from one point to another, working toward the destination. But each step of the journey reveals some truths about creation. To walk in the woods is to be surrounded by countless trees, shrubs, and other plants. And yet, each and every one of them started as a humble seed.

The Gospel passage from Luke focuses on the kingdom of God. Jesus does not give a detailed description, but rather uses examples to help us deepen our reflection on it. The examples of a mustard seed and yeast share a common quality: their power to increase greatly.

We could consider our daily lives like a walk in the woods. At first glance, it can feel like each day is about going from one point to another, always mindful of a destination. But we can also consider how each step can reveal more about the kingdom of God to us. For example, when we see someone going out of their way to help another person, we catch a flash of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is in these seemingly simple acts of compassion that will yield great increase.

The kingdom of God is at hand, but also not yet. May the readings today help us to consider the glimpses of the kingdom around us, and how God is revealed to us in each day. We are all called to work together to plant the mustard seeds to show the powerful transformation of this world. Our work will never be done, but we are continually strengthened in the Eucharist.

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Wednesday, October 26, 2022 WEDNESDAY OF

(Lec. 481) 30TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 6:1-9 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 13:22-30

FOCUS: *Strive to enter through the narrow gate*.

The last will be first and the first will be last. We must ask ourselves: Is this good news for us?

For those who suffer injustice, the answer is a resounding *yes.* Jesus’ depiction of the master and slave relationship would have been a familiar one, but he subverts it. For there is no such thing as slavery within the kingdom of God, where we belong not to one another but to God alone. In the end, the first and last may be the last and the first.

For all who have faith, the answer is a resounding *yes*. As we *strive to enter through the narrow gate*, we *will not be strong enough*…on our own. But the master of the house has given us a way to be known by him; a way for him to know where we are from; a way for us to find the path to that narrow gate and recline at table in the kingdom of God. That way is Jesus Christ. That is Christ’s own message to the crowd in the Gospel, and it’s his message to us. Follow him – he is the way. He will not leave us alone or on our own. *That* is the good news indeed.

To make the point even more starkly, imagine being welcomed into someone’s house for a meal, yet never making the effort to learn your host’s name or origin, never extending gratitude for the hospitality, never offering love in return. This is what failing to respond to the Lord’s offer of salvation and faith is like. This is what neglecting a relationship with God is like. This is how we miss the entrance to that narrow gate. For in the kingdom of God, there is no room for ungracious entitlement. In the end, the entitled will no longer be first, but likely last.

Let us not take for granted the hospitality that God offers us, so that Jesus’ message about the last being first and the first being last will, indeed, be good news.

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Thursday, October 27, 2022 THURSDAY OF

(Lec. 482) 30TH WEEK

1) Ephesians 6:10-20 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 13:31-35

Gospel related: **CCC** 557, 575, 585

FOCUS: We can rely on God’s help and on the saving work of Jesus in our daily struggles.

“Truth, righteousness, readiness for the Gospel, and faith.” In Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, these are more than virtues and attitudes. They are part of the armor of God that we are encouraged to put on as we fight our daily battle with sin and with *the evil spirits in the heavens.*

The first reading could seem like an exaggeration because Paul is offering advice on how to prepare for the end of the world and great spiritual battles in the heavens. Yet we face this spiritual battle daily in the decisions we make – our actions and words, and our attitudes about ourselves and others. We face temptations and misleading “voices” daily. Even something as seemingly simple as discouragement over our own faults and failings can be seen as *tactics of the Devil* to keep us from following Jesus faithfully in our daily lives.

Equipping ourselves with the *armor of God* can help us to win these battles and serve as faithful Christian witnesses.

But Paul reminds us that it takes more than arming ourselves with these spiritual weapons. As human beings who are so often weak or distracted, we still need to *draw [our] strength from the Lord*, praying to God in times of distress and temptation.

Finally, we know we can rely on Jesus. In today’s Gospel, he resolutely headed for Jerusalem, knowing he would face suffering and death. He spoke of accomplishing his purpose: to suffer and die on the cross and to rise from the dead to bring salvation to all of us. Therefore, in as much as he has won the overarching battle for us, we can surely trust him in times of trouble or temptation. He will be with us in all of our battles if we call upon him.

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Friday, October 28, 2022 **SAINTS SIMON & JUDE,**

(Lec. 666) **APOSTLES**

1) Ephesians 2:19-22 **- FEAST**

2) Luke 6:12-16

Gospel related: **CCC** 1577, 2600

FOCUS: We are part of God’s family.

We are *members of the household of God*. Wow. What a privilege!

As Saint Paul tells the Ephesians, we *are no longer strangers and sojourners*. Granted, there are likely times in our lives where we feel like we are strangers, or wanderers – where we feel like we do not fit in. But it is Jesus himself who looks at us with a tender, loving gaze and says “You belong. You are mine. I have called you by name.”

If we ever have any doubt of this, we need only think about today’s Gospel. Jesus *called his disciples to himself* from that large group; he chose Twelve to be his Apostles, his closest followers. He chose them. He called them by name*.*

Two of those chosen we celebrate today, Simon and Jude. Simon was part of a Jewish nationalist sect called “the Zealots,” who viewed the Roman rule over Israel a literal blasphemy against God. Jude – short for Judas – is sometimes called Jude Thaddeus to avoid being confused with Judas Iscariot. Tradition holds that these two men brought the Gospel to Persia. Many of us might be familiar with Saint Jude because he is the patron saint of lost causes, a favorite to rely on for intercession during those moments of being a stranger, or sojourner – during difficult times.

Perhaps what we can consider from today’s readings is that God calls all of us to him, to be his family along with the Apostles, prophets, and saints throughout the ages. Even when we feel unworthy, even if we feel unseen, even if we feel we don’t belong – Jesus calls us each by name. Future generations may not know much about us – they may not even know our names – but still we will be a part of the *household of God*. What could possibly be more wonderful than that?

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Saturday, October 29, 2022 SATURDAY OF

(Lec. 484) 30TH WEEK

1) Philippians 1:18b-26 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 14:1, 7-11 (Saturday in honor

 of BVM)

Gospel related: **CCC** 575, 588 **CSDC** 261

FOCUS: *Life is Christ and death is gain*.

Paul writes to the Philippians, *My eager expectation and hope* *is that I shall not be put to shame.* Yet Paul is not worried about shame for himself. Rather, he views all in relation to Christ, expressing his hope that *Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death*.

*Magnified in my body, whether by life or by death*. Paul was willing to give his own body, his own life, over to proclaiming the Gospel. *Life is Christ, and death is gain*, he says. He was not a masochist, nor was he suicidal. He simply believed and professed that all he was, and all he did, was in, through, and for Christ. Christ had primacy of place in his life. Paul wanted all to understand that he did nothing for himself, or for his own ego or reputation, but for Christ alone.

In this Paul was following Christ himself, who rejected the notion of self-promotion and exhorted his followers to show humility. In the Gospel, he dines at the home of a leading Pharisee. He is a guest at a prominent person’s home. Yet rather than seeking a place of honor for himself, Jesus observes *others* seeking honor and jockeying for position. His practical advice? “When you are invited, go and take the lowest place.”

The lowest place? Not many of us likely want to take the lowest place *anywhere*! It is hard to step back and let another take that better seat, option, or piece of pie – real or metaphorical. It is hard to let the Gospel message, and Christ himself, be more important than our own life.

Yet as Christ tells us, *Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted*.

Therefore, as we prepare to be nourished by the Eucharist, let us take a moment to consider our efforts in following Christ. Let us ask for the grace to be like Paul – where life is Christ and death is gain. And let us pray that we will one day be invited by our heavenly host: *My friend, move up to a higher position*.

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**SUNDAY,** **OCTOBER 30, 2022 31ST SUNDAY**

(Lec. 153) **IN ORDINARY TIME**

1) Wisdom 11:22—12:2

2) 2 Thessalonians 1:11—2:2

3) Luke 19:1-10

Gospel related: **CCC** 549, 1443, 2412, 2712

FOCUS: When we seek to know Jesus, we discover how much he is seeking to know us.

Traveling Broadway performances are often proclaimed as “must see” shows in their advertisements. If a show gains enough popularity, patrons might travel a great distance or pay a very high price just to see what everyone is talking about. By the time Zacchaeus hears about Jesus, it’s clear that Jesus had become a “must see” kind of person. The miracles and healings Jesus performed had gained him quite a following, so much so that Zacchaeus was unable to find a decent sightline in the crowd. Undeterred by his lack of height, he was determined to get a good look at Jesus and so he resolutely obtained a bird’s eye view in a now-famous sycamore tree. Just as we might be willing to watch a sold-out Broadway show from a theater balcony, Zacchaeus somehow found a way to see Jesus..

But imagine if that “must see” person shouted up to us on the balcony, “I am here to see you!” This is essentially what Jesus said to Zacchaeus. Even though Jesus originally intended to pass through Jericho, he could not resist staying with the tax collector. Once Zacchaeus opened his heart to seek the Lord, Jesus revealed his desire to seek him out. The key was that Zacchaeus made himself visible to Jesus. Rather than hide from Jesus because of his sins or shortcomings, he placed himself fully in the sight of the Savior.

Like Zacchaeus, we are called to seek out Jesus, knowing that he is also seeking us. This mutual “seeking” is what produces a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. When we seek out Jesus in prayer and the sacraments, we come to know him personally and allow him to know us personally. In prayer, we allow ourselves to be seen by him and have our lives transformed by his closeness to us. Jesus isn’t content with us watching him from a distance. He calls out to us and says, *Come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house*. Even if we have a sinful past like Zacchaeus, Jesus’ desire to stay with us remains the same.

It’s so important to recognize Jesus’ desire for us and – at the same time – our desire for him. These mutual desires are each gifts of God, so that we might fulfill our created purpose for union with him. When we come to celebrate the Mass, these mutual desires are profoundly met in the reception of holy Communion. And one day these desires will be fully realized for all eternity – when our joy at seeing Jesus face to face will be surpassed only by his joy at seeing us.

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Monday, October 31, 2022 MONDAY OF

(Lec. 485) 31ST WEEK

1) Philippians 2:1-4 IN ORDINARY TIME

2) Luke 14:12-14

FOCUS: *Do nothing out of selfishness or out of vainglory*.

Throughout history, selfishness and pride have been identified as primary causes of sin. This makes sense if we consider the nature of God: God is an outpouring of self so complete that three Divine Persons are perfectly one. Since God’s perfection includes such an unrelenting, outward giving of self, an endless turning toward others, then we can see why temptation and sin – turning away from God – would often take the form of turning inward, focusing on self, failing to see the needs of others.

Today, Saint Paul invites us to be *of the same mind*, to be *united in heart*, to think *one thing*.

We all know the struggle to think one thing and be united in heart. We know the struggle to communicate well with spouses, friends, or family. Maybe we have a coworker or neighbor who thinks so differently that we couldn’t imagine being “united in heart.” We all can name relationships where Paul’s exhortation feels beyond our reach.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus calls us beyond selfishness or pride to radical hospitality – to reach out in love not just to family and friends, but to people who are culturally, economically, and socially different from us.

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any participation in the Spirit, we *can* answer this call. For Christ himself draws near, invites *us* in, gives us *his* Spirit. He gives *his* eyes to see, *his* heart to love. Christ, who in his divinity is utterly beyond us, comes and invites *us* to his banquet.

May we, in encountering Christ’s humility in the sacred host, be formed in humility. May we, in this holy gift, be empowered to make a gift of ourselves, May we, in this eucharistic feast, be conformed more fully to *God’s* radical hospitality.

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